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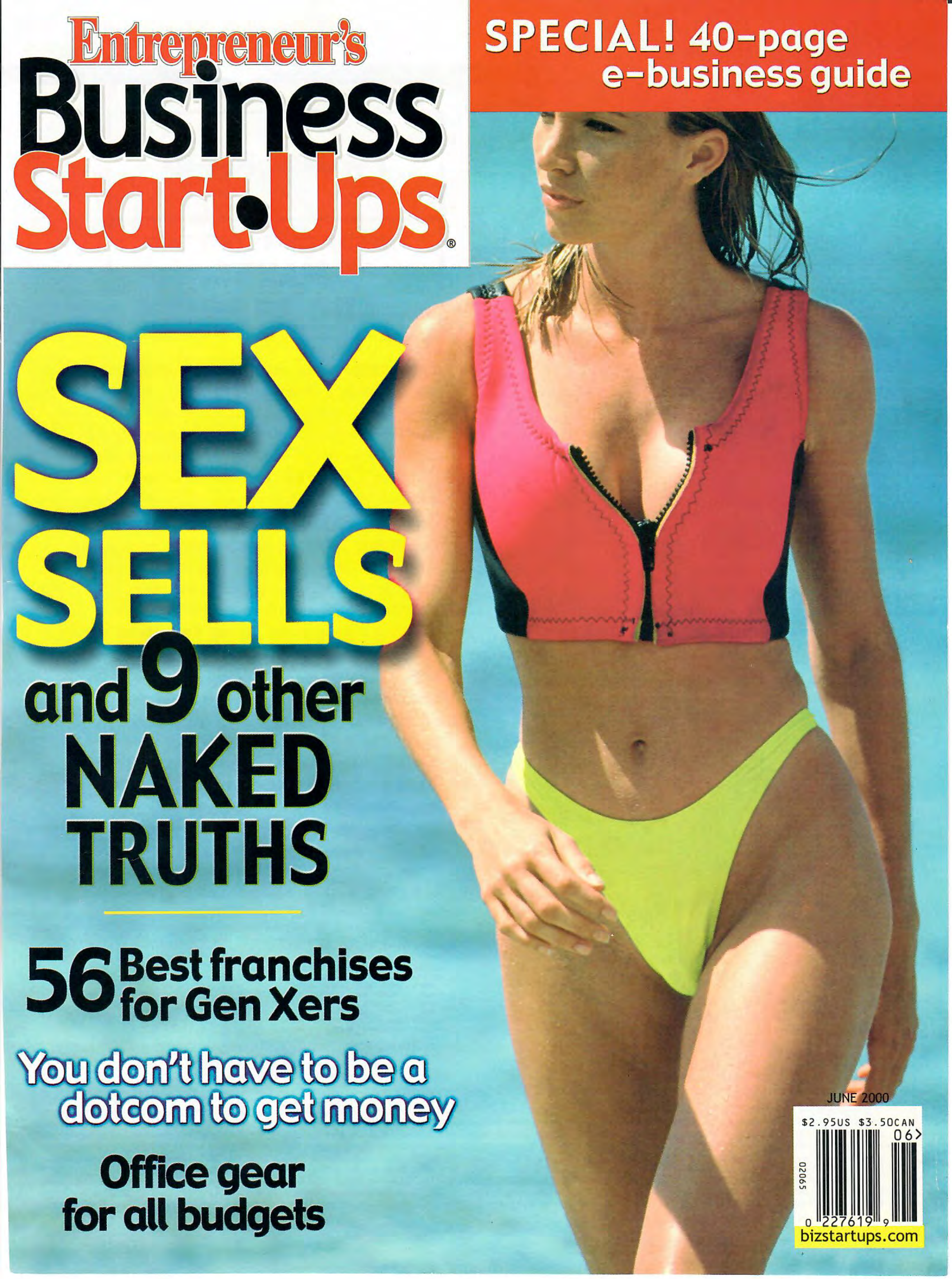

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In that spirit, we set out to find 10 key marketing strategies for your start-up. Our answers came from the unlikely combination of a pair of Internet gurus, a management consultant and a brainy Playboy centerfold—each one an expert at knowing exactly what customers want. Mind you, the techniques we discovered aren't exactly your father's marketing plan. But today's businesses aren't your father's, either.

2 Get personal. "Smart, young professional with a hectic career and lots of friends; hates moonlight strolls but loves whitewater rafting; seeks a simple life plus excitement . . . " An ad from the personals? Actually, that's the customer profile we'd use to start a new e-zine aimed at young, urban women. The moral? Know your customer. You can answer it all—from the product, to the price, to the color of the box—by knowing what your customer wants.

Kaila Colbin, 26, and Ken LaVan, 31, take that approach for their Fort Lauderdale, Florida, company thoughtSource Inc. (www.thoughtsource.com), which offers lively educational books and videos like "The Real People's Guide to the Internet." From its empathetic Web site (www.dontpanic.cc) to fun skits in its videos, thoughtSource just screams "I'm tailor-made to help nervous Net-newbies become hang-10 Web surfers."

How well do you know your customer? Does he read *Field & Stream* or *Hot Rod*? Is she into crossword puzzles or heavy metal? Where do they vacation? What's her day like? Quick exercise: Write "personal bios" for your typical customers. Then drop your

7 Market for free. Advertise your new business nationwide at no charge. Get paid to sell your services. Sound impossible? Watch this. LaVan turned thoughtSource's training videos into live seminars. Community groups pay the team to present their programs, and attendees buy the packages. And Colbin and LaVan get free focus groups to beta-test their wares. Can a class or demo boost your biz exposure? Or how about getting radio time, TV spots and full-page newspaper spreads—all at no charge? Simple. Turn your business into news. Make what you do interesting to the media. Find a trend and grab on. "Too many kids are overweight"—our health club offers a K-12 program. "Buildings can make you sick"—better call our cleaning service. "Latin music is hot"—so why not sample our authentic salsas? Want your business to get ahead? Then get a headline.

10 Sell sex. When thoughtSource premiered a book concerning sex called *Society and the Net*, it attracted a media storm. Surprise! It was all praise, because Colbin and LaVan gave the topic a wholesome twist: how to keep kids away from porn, Web sites for good relationships, Net facts about Viagra. A positive story—and a PR goldmine.